

“We all do our own thing”.

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Abstract

“It is a ridiculous idea, it should be put into a closet, locked into a dark closet” replied the editor-in- chief of a sports magazine when questioned about reconsidering audience needs and interests when planning the content of his magazine.

“We all do our own thing. Everyone has his or her own idea” (about the audience and newspaper content) replied a reporter to an interview question about the targeted audience of her newspaper. This seems to be a fairly common answer in newspaper and magazine newsrooms when discussing audience and content. Individualistic work culture and idea of artistic freedom still dominate the identity of many journalists even though in practice demand for sustaining readership and circulation figures has become a dominant management discourse in many newsrooms.

We present data from three research sites - a newspaper, a magazine and a web site – on how journalists discuss their audience and how a common purpose and conception of audience were constructed in research based developmental interventions in the newsrooms.

Cultural historical activity theory defines the object or purpose of work as heterogeneous and contradictory. Different historical layers of work cultures, identities and practices exist side by side and in time of rapid changes of the media field become visible as disturbances and contradictions in the work practices and talk in the newsroom.

Introduction

Audience research in Europe has been for the last decades been mostly the domain of Cultural studies. The main questions have been how audiences respond to popular texts, TV-shows or music and on the other hand about ordinary people’s resistance to the hegemonic meanings in media. Livingstone suggests however that a research agenda is needed which “connects audience research with production/text/context research as firmly as actual audiences are, inevitably, connected with actual production/text/context” (Sonia Livingstone, 1988).

In this paper we present data from the production side – on how journalists discuss the issue of audience in their work. We present data from three cases which all involve research driven developmental interventions into the work of journalists and the production of content.

We have categorized the different voices or discourses of audience by journalists into 5 categories:

1. Absence of audience - discourse.

Journalists are not interested in the audience but decide by themselves what is important in their work, which often is expressed as following the in-house rules or following implicit or “self-evident” ideals and norms of news journalism – without ever opening that black box.

A sub category can be described as the dumb audience - discourse which means that journalists don't have to think about their audience(s).

2. Marketing and measuring audiences - discourse.

This discourse comes from the marketing department and the targeted and measured audience which is sold to the advertisers. This is the talk of Risk Analysis or Value Graphics which have also been taken into use by media management in trying to construct new guidelines for writing news stories and magazine articles.

With web publishing the interest of many journalists has turned into how many users have clicked open web stories and some journalists have realized that “clicks are also good for marketing”.

3. Important information for the audience, chosen and delivered by journalists - discourse.

Audience is seen as recipient of factual information and the journalists think they know best what is good for the audience and democracy. This kind of talk depicts the audience either a passive audience receiving information chosen by the journalists or as citizens to be activated into taking part in civic affairs.

This audience discourse aims at activating readers to become active citizens and influence decision making either nationally or locally. This discourse can also be called public service journalism (Donsbach, 2009) but the issues and suggestions for involvement are still mostly chosen by the journalists or owners of the media. This discourse however has turned into a more dialogic relationship with internet and the dialogical tools it offers.

In practice delivering information appears often to be a very heterogeneous discourse as journalists seem to differ in the same newspaper newsroom what facts to actually deliver in their daily practice in terms of topics, framing and style of presentation. “We all do our own thing” described one reporter the different and conflicting conceptions of what they were doing in the newsroom and why.

4. Me, my colleagues and friends as the audience - discourse.

This comes up e.g. in expressions that my friends like this kind of story or I certainly would be interested in this topic. Colleagues seem to be an important reference group and many journalists in our data emphasized that they valued the opinions of their colleagues much more than those of the management or readers.

5. Addressing audience interests and needs - discourse.

This kind of voice emerged more strongly during our developmental interventions where we focused on discussing and negotiating a common purpose for the work of the newsroom. This involved giving up the idea of a homogeneous audience and absolute journalistic authority.

To facilitate discussing audiences new concepts are needed and we applied a theoretical concept from literary theory – the implied reader as a tool for talking about the readers. This meant creating an imaginary reader with certain demographics and lifestyle and specific needs and interest that the journalistic content should pay attention to with e.g. framing stories, visual style, forms of writing and ways addressing the reader.

Our data consists of a newspaper and a magazines and one newspaper/web site. The first four categories were prevalent in newspapers and the needs and interests of different audiences has been a guiding principle in magazines for centuries, both in marketing departments and newsrooms. But with the diminishing circulation newspapers are nowadays paying more attention to their audiences and their needs and interests.

The data presented is from three ethnographic research projects:

1. National Finnish newspaper 1995-1997.
2. Finnish sports magazine 2006-2007.
3. Finnish national newspaper and its new website 2006-2007.

The data was gathered with interviews and ethnographic observation in developmental interventions using the Change Laboratory method (M. Helle, 2000) in the first case and the Mediaconcept Laboratory (M. T. Helle, Maija, 2009) in the last two research cases.

Activity theory and object of activity

Cultural historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Cole, 1996; Y. Engeström, Lompscher, J., Ruckriem, G., 2005) emphasizes that human activity is culturally and materially mediated and directed outside itself (A. N. Leontjev, 1978; Aleksei Nikolajevits Leontjev, 1981) - to the object of activity – and it frames our analysis of journalistic work and audiences. The meaning of "object" is in English language easily reduced to understanding the object only as a tool, a material artifact. The "object" in activity theory comes from the German word "Gegenstand" - an object of inquiry, a possibility of concrete outcomes, what the subjects are striving to accomplish with their actions (Adler, 2005). The object in activity theory thus has a dual nature, it is something imagined, strived for, and the concrete outcome produced with the actions and operations by the subjects. Objects are both mental representations and concrete outcomes. In actual practice object of work it is always an approximation of what the activity system tries to achieve. The object is transformed in the course of the activity and the transformed object again influences the work practice, the actions and operations. The object is not fixed but is a transitional being:

"The object is both something given and something anticipated, projected, transformed, and achieved. In the transformation of the object, also the tools, or the mediating artifacts, are transformed." (Y. Engeström, 1990), 181.

The object of activity is also a historical construction as well as heterogeneous and contested in the everyday practice. There are different opinions in work places about what should be done and how. This proved to be true in all our research sites.

Absent audience discourse in a newspaper

Our first audience discourse data is from an ethnographic research in a large national Finnish newspaper 1995-1997. The dominant audience discourse was that of an absent audience and the internal house rules and to have no mistakes in facts were the most central concerns in 1996. In the national news department only 5 out of 19 journalists we interviewed mentioned audiences or readers at all. Most of them in connection with being recipients of information chosen by journalists. After the developmental intervention called Change Laboratory (Virkkunen, Engeström, Helle, Pihlaja, & Poikela, 1997) where the purpose of the news work was discussed in ten two hour session in interviews done in 1997 16 out of 24 journalists mentioned readers in their replies to questions like "when have you succeeded in your work".

In this latter set of answers the audience discourse turned more towards the form of news stories and making factual news more interesting to readers e.g. by dealing more with issues of their everyday life than political decision making. But the journalists still decided the content and framing of stories. There was no need to know about the readers in any detailed way because "its is our expertise to know what is best for the readers. We cannot go asking them, they could not even answer such questions". Audiences were not discusses in any detail and the newsroom did not have access or interest to demographics of the present readers of the national newspaper. Which the marketing department had.

Before the Change Laboratory started in 1996 researchers interviewed journalists about what they thought their work consisted of and when they felt having succeeded in their work.

Many saw their work as being responsible for keeping the wheels of production going: keeping the timetable, making no mistakes, obeying the guidelines of news reporting of newspaper culture.

Interviewer: Why do you do the job, what is the object of it, what should be accomplished?

Journalist 8: Send good pages according to the deadline. Hah hah,(chuckles) that is all I can say.

...

Interviewer: Sowhat is a successful evening like, what is it like?

Journalist 8: Well, it is like...the best evenings are when one has to an awful amount of work in a short time. One has to shovel and the quality must still be good with instinctive solutions.

There were different viewpoints between the proponents of objective news reporting and the proponents of more lively and personal way of writing news stories. Some answers were argumentative and seemed to indicate that the different ideas about good journalism had been debated in the newsroom, as can be seen in excerpt.

Interviewer: Well, how would you characterize the content and purpose of your work?

Journalist 12: That is a difficult question. Well, I have all through my work history seen myself, before all, as relaying information, and before anything, it is the content of my work. I am sort of, a child of the old school, in the sense that I don't think for example that entertaining and creating an interesting experience (for the readers) are so relevant. Of course one also hopes that one could make oneself and others think about things a little bit from another perspective also...and notice things in one's surroundings. But it is true that one seldom does it, ... and besides how to turn it into flesh and blood or action?

Interviewer: But how?

Journalist 12: Of course, in principle one would wish, that it had some effect on something.

Interviewer: Yes, how does it show if you have succeeded in your work?

Journalist 12: People come by, or phone, or come to talk. At best it shows when something is done to the issue, more than just talk, but like changing laws or directives or ... these bureaucratic stories are made clearer and more understandable.

This kind of talk in 1997 about making the readers more active in participating in civic issues and giving them more information on how to accomplish was a break away from the passive audience talk in 1996. Readers became also sources for stories and their experiences began to appear on the pages in story series like what is it like to be poor in Finland, which received hundreds of letters from the readers. The reporter described as her purpose to show the political decision makers what life is really like for people and that something should be done about their problems.

Four different clusters emerged from the talk about success in the work. The first cluster focused on in-house rules of good journalism and the smooth production flow. The outside world or the audience were not discussed in general. In 1996 10 out the 19 reporters interviewed belonged to this category. After the Change Laboratory, in spring 1997, only 2 reporters were in this category (M. Helle, 2000; Virkkunen, et al., 1997).

a) Following the norms and practices of the Daily News

Some journalists saw their work in terms of being responsible for keeping the wheels of production going: keeping the timetable, making no mistakes, obeying the unwritten guidelines of news reporting of the newspaper.

Interviewer: Why do you do the job, what is the object of it, what should it accomplish?

Journalist 8: To send good pages according to the deadline. Hah, (chuckles) that is all I can say.

Interviewer: Well, this is such a serious question.

Journalist 8: Yeah, that is all I can say.

Interviewer: And the answer is practical.

Journalist 8: Well, it is all right, the question is all right, because...

Interviewer: So what is a successful evening like, what is it like?

Journalist 8: Well, it is, the best evenings are when one has to do an awful lot of work in a short time. One has to shovel the stuff in, and the quality must even be good, with instinctive solutions.

Several journalists defined the purpose as delivering facts, without any mistakes:

"A good paper? Isn't it the about the basic principles of the (Daily News).

Trustworthy, many-sided, absolutely many-sided -the most readable paper in Finland, that is what we try to do ... Careful, pedantic work. One must not make any mistakes."

b) Competition with other media, scoops and interesting stories

Competition with other newspapers as well as radio and TV, the traditional scoop-mentality, was the main emphasis in two answers. In 1997 three reporters thought of responding to competition from other media as the most important criteria of successful newswork.

"We have our own news.... not something the radio or TV blast all day long....something that stops the readers".

There had been attempts to "stretch" the limits of the traditional news pyramid form in the national newsroom as becomes clear in the following excerpt:

"Well, one half is that you try to find news of your own. And the other is that, you write so that the stories are interesting. And then, if possible, as in new types of stories, new both in content and form. And that is what we have tried to do in the national newsroom for a couple of years, that we create completely new types of stories."

"Well, the traditional, if we get some real news before the other media, or can make a new social phenomenon understandable. Or it is enough that we do interesting stories about interesting topics."

c) Transmitting information, mirroring the society

The transmission of information was mentioned by 4 reporters in 1996, and in 1997 by 13. There were interesting twists in the focus of the transmission approach. One was that instead of informing citizens, the purpose was the reverse, informing the decision makers about the conditions of the citizens. Or the purpose of journalism was to provide for future historians a true picture of the state of affairs in Finland.

"We must mirror the Finnish society, the different phenomena, different perspectives and of course (break) the news..""but it seems that besides hard news, we think it important to express these, what should I call them, inner vibrations."

"It is also about history, documenting in some...in some way, it should be able to convey our recent history, a picture of our time."

There were differences between the viewpoints of the proponents of the "objective" news reporting and the proponents of more lively and personal news stories. Some answers were argumentative and seemed to indicate that the different ideas about good journalism had been debated in the newsroom, as can be seen in the excerpt below. The problem of implementing the new ideas was not believed to be easy to solve.

Interviewer: Well, how would you characterize the content and purpose of your work?
Journalist 12: That is a difficult question. Well, I have all through my work history seen myself, before all, as relaying information, and before anything, it is the content of my work. I am sort of, a child of the old school, in the sense that I don't think for example, that entertaining and creating interesting experiences are so relevant. Of course one also hopes that one could make oneself and others think about things a little bit from another perspective also,...and notice things in one's surroundings. But it is true that one seldom does it ... and besides how to turn it into flesh and blood or action?

d) Encouraging public discussion and instigating changes in the society.

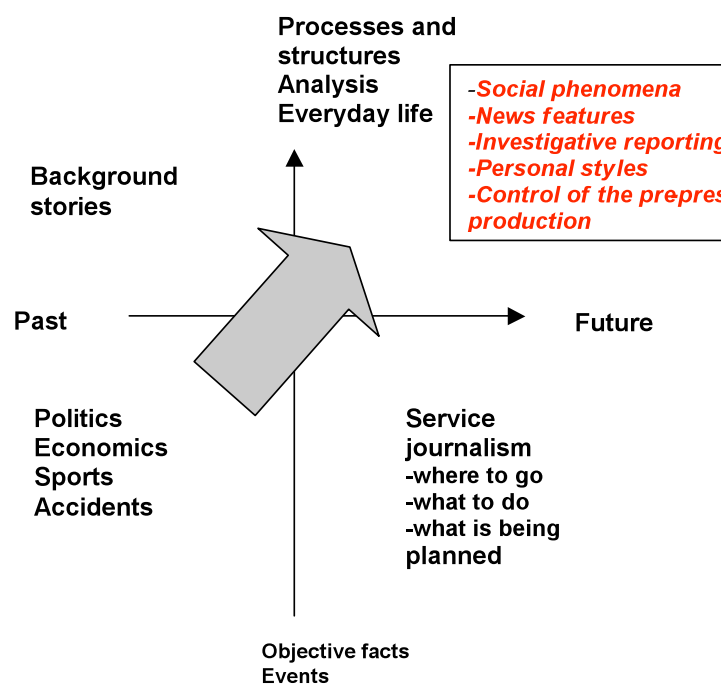
The fourth category addressed the possibility of the news stories to influence political decision making by bringing up important issues from the life-world of the readers. Four reporters in 1996, and three in 1997 mentioned it as the most important object of their work.

"When we have succeeded in bringing into the public discussion something new."

"Well, it shows when a discussion springs up, or people come around or call. Or, of course, at its best, it results in more than discussion, in something being done about it, a law is changed."

These heterogeneous voices from the interviews were discussed in the Change Laboratory sessions with the journalists and it became evident that the different conceptions about what is good news journalism had different historical roots. In the fall 1996 a new idea for content was developed in the Change Laboratory sessions by the newsroom and it was called societal reporting meaning stories that dealt more with consequences of political decisions on the everyday life of citizens and readers. However the topics and issues would still be decided by journalists with the help e. g research reports or statistical overviews about changes in the Finnish society. The change from describing yesterday's events to reporting and analysis was modeled into a graph below.

Figure 1. The contested, heterogeneous object of journalism at the Daily News



The time scale from past to future illustrates how the temporal dimension was changing in newspaper journalism. The event-based journalism told the readers what had happened yesterday in the political or economic fields, or described yesterday's accidents, or other events. The emergence of the real-time television and Internet news had changed the competitive field. Newspaper news is often not new anymore. The strength of newspapers has grown in giving background analysis, situating the events into a broader historical context. The competition from the magazines has influenced the emergence of "life-style" stories in quality newspapers. In the Daily News the timescale changed also in the so-called service journalism. The focus was on the future happening mostly: where to go, what to eat, what to read and so on.

Also in reporting the national or local politics, the focus began to move from past events towards following issues through the whole political process, from the emergence of new ideas for legislation and their process into laws or statutes approved in the parliament or town hall. The focus had shifted also towards the effects the decisions had on the lives of the readers, which often appeared as sidebars to the main story. The sidebar type of story could turn into a feature about the everyday lives of the citizens. Also new kinds of writing styles and story genres had begun to emerge, instead of the 'objective' news pyramid.

The excerpts above and the discussions in laboratory sessions focused on a central contradiction in the newsroom: the tension between the old rules of objective journalism and the need to have more interesting, analytical, and personal stories. Subjective was not seen as an opposite to objective, as less trustworthy, but as a personal, interpretative way of looking at

issues. A tension remained however in the newsroom between a few proponents of "old-style objectivity" and those who wanted more news stories about the everyday life of the citizens.

Implied reader

The central concept used the Mediaconcept Laboratory was the notion of an implied reader. We proposed this as a new epistemic object for the newsroom to be researched, debated, developed and put into practice. The concept of an implied reader comes from literary studies and narratology (Abbot, 2002; Iser, 1971; Rimmon-Kenan, 1999). According to Abbot the implied reader should not be confused with the real life reader. It does not depict a reader in flesh but is a fictive reader for a story or narrative is targeted at.

Audience is a slippery and multifaceted concept. The debate between the notions of audience or public has raged since the 1980's between cultural studies and political communication (e.g. Colloquy in Critical Studies in Mass communication 1995, for summary see Meehan, 1999). The choice of audience concept and background theory has several implications as readers are constructed e.g. either as consumers or citizens and are thus offered different kinds of journalism. Sometimes it seems completely forgotten in the heat of the debate that we exist in a variety of positions - we can be politically active citizens and still enjoy food recipes or celebrity gossip.

The word "audience" turns out to be difficult in different languages especially in relation to the word public used by critical media scholars. In the Finnish language there is only one word – yleisö – that means both public and audience – the terms used by English speaking media researchers. There has been an attempt to devise a new word "julkiso" to make the distinction between consumers of citizens visible in research texts (Kunelius, 2000; Pietilä & Ridell, 1998) but it has remained an artificial construct. In this paper we use the word audience as a generic term.

The French language uses the term public as a generic term and audience is the version public that is defined by qualitative measures (Dayan, 2005). According to Dayan audiences do not know that they belong to an audience. The status of audience is bestowed upon them from the outside by either media management, advertising or researchers. Dayan is interested in publics in three forms - as ideations or postulates, for example by researches, secondly publics as sociological constructs and finally publics as actors in collective and cultural processes that allow for subjective experiences.

Media organizations aim their products at specified audiences and have a purpose for publishing – either financial or ideological. Management and marketing speak of segmented target audiences meaning the predicted audience in Napoli's terms (Napoli, 2003). When media organizations gather statistical information about its audience the measured audience emerges. More and more information is also gathered through ethnographic methods of citizens/consumers

and their media behavior in the everyday life to try to understand what Napoli calls the actual audience - people who read or watch the media. However the actual audience always remains unknowable to a certain degree. It is always a perception of an audience by media firms and advertisers (Napoli, 2003, pp. 29-34). And also by journalists.

In our Mediaconcept Laboratories we have used the term implied reader (Iser, 1971) as a concept to facilitate thinking about the readers, their interests, levels of knowledge lifestyles etc. that guide the selection of news topics, their content and styles of presentation.

We prefer to use the term of implied reader from narrative research instead of Napoli's (2003) marketing based concept of a predicted or measured reader. We combine the term of an implied reader with tools from rhetorical analysis and textual analysis to analyze and construct how a readership position is built into the media texts by journalists. The readership position is built into the content and outlook of media and e. g. how the reader is addressed (as a woman, child, equal, in need of advice etc), what is the anticipated level of knowledge of the reader, how the reader is addressed, what topics and frames are chosen etc (Töyry, 2005, 2006).

Implied reader can mean different thing in different research traditions and e.g. Livingstone has used the concept to mean ways in which audiences are theorized outside audience theory and "how they form part of the often invisible assumptions on which much theorizing about the media, society and social change is built" (Sonia Livingstone, 1988), 9.

Journalistic ideology and identity

The traditional voice of public service journalism is at the heart of much journalistic culture and self-regulative rules. According to (Donsbach, 2009) the other two voices are subjective tradition of pursuing the individual goals of journalists and the commercial tradition of giving people what they want. News journalism is often described by researchers and journalists themselves as an uniform ideal. Journalistic culture of news journalism as consisting of universal ideals which form the basis of journalistic culture and identity.

Deuze has called these ideals "ideology" of journalism (Deuze, 2005, p. 443). For him journalism as an ideology shows how the journalists give meaning to their work. Deuze constructs occupational ideology as a possible meeting point for journalism studies and education, and suggests the need for researchers to analyze "how emerging sociocultural and socioeconomic issues stand to transform ways of thinking about and doing journalism". He however claims that as technology and society are changing journalism is also changing. New media technologies and multiculturalism are the main change agents according Deuze.

Deuze (2005, 47) describes five ideal types of values of journalism:

1. Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or 'newshounds', active collectors and disseminators of information).

2. Objectivity: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible.
3. Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work.
4. Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of 'news').
5. Ethics: journalists have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy.

However according to Deuze these values can be sometimes inconsistent and contradictory. For example objectivity does not necessarily mean better journalism. It can also be an excuse for lazy journalism, uncritical dissemination of PR-releases or transmission of staged media events (Cunningham, 2003). The ideal values can change as journalism continuously re-invents itself and at the same time engages in debates in which ideology is used to sustain operational closure, as Deuze points out.

This definition by Deuze applies only to parts of the Western culture and to only some media products. The list refers to news journalism and does not take into account magazine journalism nor literary journalism, service journalism, advocacy journalism, citizen journalism etc. It is not sensitive to the different conceptions e.g. in Europe about the differing norms of good journalism. There are marked differences in European countries on issues about political partisanship, objectivity or separation of news and opinion. They have different status for example between German or English journalism (Donsbach & Klett, 1993).

Deuze's journalism as ideology does not say anything about the audience. Maybe it is because journalists seldom talk about their audience, and when they do they often use fairly derogatory terms (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001). Also according to Gans reporters and editors have a vague idea of their audiences. According to him they mostly ignore us and write for their colleagues (Gans, 1980).

This indifference of journalists as towards their audiences has raised questions and also some analysis in cultural studies. For example already Zelizer has drawn attention to how little we know about the people who construct the reality for us. It is worrying that "the mechanisms by which reality is constructed are hidden, not acknowledged by journalists themselves". According to Zelizer a new frame is needed to explain journalism by focusing on how journalists shape meaning about themselves, their work, and their audience (Zelizer, 1993, p. 223).

The newspaper and news reporters faced the dilemma of a changing society in Verdens Gang, VG, in Norway. Eide describes VG as one of many "schizophrenic newspapers, in the middle ground between academic elitism and vulgar ignorance" (Eide, 1997, p. 174). As the consumer society has changed consumers there is also a need for a new conception of media audience and VG solved this schizophrenic double bind between importance and interesting by focusing the main content on providing readers with guidance and addressing readers as

consumers, clients and private persons, not so much as citizens (Eide, 1997, p. 177). But VG also covers e.g. politics and other so called hard news beside the gory murder stories and advice columns for readers - thus the researchers description of a schizophrenic content.

The issue of audiences has become even more complicated with the arrival of internet publishing. Livingstone describes the complex audience problematics as becoming more difficult to solve:

"It seems that mediated communication is no longer simply or even mainly mass communication ('from one to many') but rather the media now facilitate communication among peers (both 'one to one' and 'many to many'). Perhaps even this distinction – between peer-to-peer and mass or broadcast communication – is becoming outdated as new and hybrid modes of communication evolve." (Sonja Livingstone, 2004, pp. 76-77) p. 76-77.

Trying to understand a media concept and especially in efforts to change the journalism the issues of journalistic identity – professional codes, ideology, culture) - needs analyzing but also questioning. The construction of journalistic identity in all its heterogeneity and emotionality indicates that journalism is not only an occupation to earn a living. It is personal way of situating oneself in the world and building one's identity - professional and individual intertwined.

Contradictory discourses in a magazine

In the second research project the data was collected from a sports magazine 2006-2007 where the CEO was worried about falling circulation figures and the newsroom refused to discuss the issue.

In analyzing the history of the sports magazine it became evident that it had gone through different historical periods starting as an information letter of a national sport association. Then it was made into a tabloid newspaper and filled mainly with organizational news and sports statistics and some news stories also about the players and games. Ten years ago the sports association decided to sell the publishing rights of the association's newspaper to a private publishing company and it was agreed that the content would be divided into two publishing platforms: a tabloid bi-monthly tabloid sized newspaper aimed at the senior and junior players of different age and competence groups. The magazine was targeted at sports fans and followers of the games.

The sport association's newspaper did not have much advertising and it was funded by the association so there was no marketing department. But in the publishing company the new magazine had to generate income and profits and new people were hired to sell ads and increase circulation. The editor-in-chief had worked with the sport association and the editor-in-chief over 10 years with the sports magazines. The recently hired new sports writer and AD wanted to make the magazine more interesting and raise the quality of stories and visuality and this also the

circulation. So it was no wonder the voices and opinions resulted in sometimes loud arguments about the future of the magazine.

In the sports magazine and the publishing company we discovered in the beginning ¹ two major dominant discourses: marketing discourse and journalistic news discourse.

1. Absent audience discourse voiced by the editor in chief and the managing editor.

The editor-in-chief strongly opposed any changes in his magazine and especially involving the marketing department and the publisher in the discussion. He also did not value at all the statistics about the measures audience gathered by marketing. He did not want to be involved in any kind of discussions about the audience or their possible interests in the magazines. He told that he knew what the content should be and he also had the final voice in any discussions of the content of the magazine. He claimed that the national circulation studies were also wrong about his magazine “because my friends at the sports events always praise my paper as the best among competition”. So he also used myself and my friends –discourse when pressed for opinions about the audience. Just like the managing editor who cited several times the opinion of his son, whose junior team he was coaching:

“This is what they want, I know what my son wants to read”.

Thinking about the audience seemed to threaten their whole identity as news journalist and the rules of objective reporting and result in loss of journalistic autonomy.

Editor-in-chief became quite agitated in several sessions and said that:

“I don’t know if should do that (talk with marketing). We have not talked before with the sales people or chief of marketing. I don’t think their opinions matter a f..s worth when we are discussing journalism”.

Managing editor thought it would be unnecessary but also impossible to narrow down the targeted audience or implied reader:

“Go sometimes to match and look what kind of people populate the seats. There people form babies to granddads and they experience the game with their feelings. I think it is suicide to try to pick out those trendy city males which are 32 years old.”

The editor-in-chief suggested that the idea of an implied reader (and thinking about audience needs) “should be buried in a dark closet, a very dark closet and the door should be locked forever”.

2. Marketing discourse was at first based on the talk of targeting audience of the advertising department. For them audience and readers were important because of the falling advertising revenue. If the circulation kept falling their jobs and the jobs of journalists were in danger. We

¹ Annika Ruoranen has produced the data analysis and is writing her master’s theses about the different discourses in the magazine.

arranged a series of Mediaconcept Laboratory sessions in 2006-7 both separately for the newsroom and marketing department but also four sessions together.

The marketing department thought that the magazine had no clear idea about their audience and to whom the content was aimed. Therefore it was also difficult to sell the audience to advertisers.

The chief of marketing talked about the audience and readers as consumers, possible targets of advertising. For her the targeted reader was:

“It is a male, and there are lots of products and possibilities for advertising to male readers”.

In some of the interviews a marketing people also discussed the lifestyle of the reader:

“In principle just those drinking beer, watching sports on TV, following sports”

The marketing people wanted to construct a younger targeted audience than the newsroom and focused on his the lifestyle and consumer behavior.

2. Journalistic discourse about delivering factual information about sports events, statistics etc.

Even though the magazine was published only ten issues a year the editor-in-chief and managing editor still used the delivering news – discourse. Statistics about the national league results and several international leagues still abounded in the magazine. Even though they could be months old when published. News about the sports association’s decisions and elections appeared also in the magazine. But the magazine looked like a regular magazine with colorful cover of players or exciting situations from the games. So the message to the readers was quite contradictory.

The editor-in-chief said that the newsroom’s construction of an implied reader to help journalistic work would only restrict their work. He thought that all readers were interested in news, the magazines own analysis of the games, statistics and some player interviews focusing on sports. These kind of people were his target group.

“Of course I have to know my target (journalistic) group. But if we just always try figure out like what kind of hair color the reader has, then hallelujah, I say that the marketing people can think about these kind of issues in their little cubicles”.

After the Mediaconcept Laboratory sessions began September 2006 a third discourse was introduced by the researchers into the discussions with the newsroom and marketing department. The idea of constructing of an implied reader by journalists raised strong opposition by the newsroom managers. But the young reporter and AD embraced it almost immediately as did the marketing department and publisher who saw better and more interesting content for the readers as a key for the survival of the magazine.

3. The third discourse was produced and negotiated in the Mediaconcept Laboratory session and is called the audience interests and needs discourse. The concept of an implied reader was central in the discussions. Producing relevant, important and interestingly presented content for the readers and audiences means also a new way of organizing work to accomplish this aim and we have also called this discourse as the planning and editing discourses **Helle&Töyry 2009**.

During the Mediaconcept Laboratory sessions the reporter and AD supported the idea of creating an implied reader and target group for advertising and they constructed it as Tony, 28, a sports fan, beer lover, single, watching sports also from TV. Tony was interested of course in the games itself but also in background information, longer stories about the players and their life, pictures of gaming situations and also stories about upcoming events or changes in the sports field.

Marketing department also added some lifestyle issues like Tony using a lot of money for stereos, TV, pubs, fast food restaurants, sporty clothes etc. In terms of content Tony was thought to like stories about the players, both their sports performance but also their lifestyles and hobbies.

The magazine's content was change and more emphasis were given for longer journalistic stories about players, game analysis, sports economics etc. Statistics were moved partly into the web, sports association's organizational "newsletter stories" were banned but longer features, more analytical background stories and also stories about sports business were developed as permanent story types. Also the magazine's outlook was developed to include more colour, pictures and easy to read infographics.

Audience and media concept when moving from print to web

"Creative industries as the conceptual and practical convergence of the creative arts (individual talent) with Cultural Industries (mass scale), in the context of new media technologies (ICT's within a new Knowledge Economy, for the use of newly interactive citizen-consumers" (Hartley, 2005).

Our third research site a daily financial newspaper paper was in crisis because of serious difficulties with circulation and revenue. The management of media company had created a new plan for survival and had decided develop the papers into a new kind of web publication in 2006-2007 which should interest lots of new readers and create increased revenue with web advertising.

There was need to 1) create the new concept of the web and 2) rethink the concept of printed paper after daily news were moved to the web site. When creating or re-organizing media products the key issue is to focus on the object of work, the relationship with the audience: Why and to whom the web or print is published? The questions were not at all new to journalists of the paper. As one of them said in an interview:

“We have been told several times that the top level executives and middle level managers are our most important target group. And after them people who invest in stocks, we have lots of readers among them. And of course it is an extremely difficult question and we have been thinking about it for ten years – what should our audience be”. (The paper was delivered to a stock savers associations for free and paid by the association).

In the early interviews in 2006 we found numerous examples of the absent and stupid audience discourse and the other common audience discourse was me and my friends as target group. The third discourse was marketing discourse as in the last ten years marketing had been in a leading role in efforts to develop the newspaper and its content.

Journalist: But if we want to be a financially succesful product we cannot forget our most important basic target readers, the affluent executives”.

In this paper we focus on the audience needs which became hotly debated both in the printed paper and web site development efforts after we introduced the concept of an implied reader into the Mediaconcept Laboratory discussions.

To discuss the audience issue and what it meant for content and ways of organizing the daily work we used the model of a media concept (M. T. Helle, Maija, 2009) which mediates between the different perspectives of the publisher, journalists, marketing, printing plants, it-department, sources and audiences. In every single issue of a media publication media these different perspectives (Holland & Reeves, 1996) have to negotiated at least temporarily, often within a pressured timetable.

The first level of a media concept consists of the values an activity is based on. The values can be financial or ideological or both. However the publisher can have different and contradictory objects, like those concerning profit and quality and low newsroom costs. The values may also change in time especially in the world of increased revenue demands and shareholder profits The values of the publisher co-exist with the values of the journalists and journalistic culture as well as those of the audience not to forget society and its diverse or homogeneous values.

The value part of a media concept is usually the least talked about aspect in the newsroom as the values of the publisher are implicit or black boxed - more or less - into the content and outlook of the media as well as in the organizational principles and structures and resource allocation. And the needs and interests of audiences are often neglected especially in newspapers.

The concept of any media emerges as an outcome in the daily practice and negotiations. Without a commonly shared media concept the outcome will depend on individual choices and there is no shared agreement about the content, outlook or style of writing.

The flowing excerpt from an interview from our third case depicts the work in the newsroom as almost anarchistic individuality and this theme came up in most of our 28 interviews in the research site of a national newspaper in 2006-2007.

“Everyone has their own idea. Everyone has her or his personal opinion about the readers. We use our own imagination”.

Second level on the media concept centers around two issues. How to create lasting readership relations in practice and how to organize the work process to accomplish it? In the concept of the implied reader and his or her needs condenses the values of the publishers and the needs of the audience. The main practical tool for the production is the structure of the media product, in newspapers and magazines the map of pages. In printed media newspapers or magazines have a standard order of departments and story types from the beginning of the paper to the end. The order and the size of the story topics and their styles become in time familiar to the readers and form the building blocks of a serial publication. Architecture or structure of the media keeps together the complex interests of the parties involved in the production of the media concept as an artifact.

The third level of media concept concerns the daily practices of producing media content and as well as the interplay of marketing and circulation departments with the newsroom – like negotiating about the news hole. The dramaturgy, story guidelines and rules, tools for different writing genres and textual styles to address different readers, editing and feed back systems are some of the issues of this level.

The only explicit example we have been able to find so far of the use of an implied reader is an article by Niblock ja Machin (2007) on a British radio news agency. They did not use the term implied reader but talked about targeting hundreds of audience segments across the country. The information about the different geographical and demographic target groups came to newsroom from marketing research and it was used as a basis for news selection and varying writing and presenting styles for different audience groups. The business model was based on delivering differently formulated news content for differently constructed audiences of the different client news stations. The new service was free as the revenue came from ads that were attached to the news clips. The news bulletins were delivered daily to 260 radio stations and 27 million listeners.

Targeting of the audience was divided according to their lifestyle, not only demographic differences. Targeting was accomplished by a careful selection of news topics and the way they were presented at different times of the day to different audience groups and use of language. The editors did not they had to compromise on news values but thought it was important to think about different audience needs and interest to ensure their news was accessible and engaging. The basic facts of a news story were the same but the framing, structure, story line, language and metaphors used were differed (Niblock & Machin, 2007).

The core values of news bulletin should speak to the target consumer group and fit their psychographic profile. The members of newsroom referred these different target audiences e.g. as “Craig from Birmingham” and “Dora from Mavis Enderby”. For example these two had a completely different psychographic profile and the news bulletins had to be constructed to suit them.

In the newspaper of or third case at first the whole idea of constructing a media concept and an implied reader and changing one’s object from “my news stories” to “our readers and their needs” met with heavy resistance. In the first workshop the following excerpts illustrates the logic of several instances of skepticism or resistance because it is impossible to create an implied readers because the readers form such a heterogeneous group:

“I don’t think we can build this kind of implied reader for the web, though it might be possible for the printed paper. One can never find out exactly what kinds of people surf in the net and what interests them. Because the number of visitors for the most read and least read stories can be so conflicting, like you never can, but in time you learn to smell what becomes a hit. But the topics can be so surprising, so the knowledge level of the readers has nothing to do with this. So I think pinning down the implied reader and who are we writing for, first of all it is difficult, I guess it is impossible.”

In the Mediaconcept Laboratory the first suggestions for an implied reader for the website was created by a team whose task it was to make a suggestion. They suggested as an implied reader Rita, 32 years old, almost MBA, working in a consulting company, living in the city with his boyfriend. Rita raised heated debate at first, but as the need for an implied reader was gradually accepted Rita was also modified as were the attitudes towards her. The object thus was evolving and is still evolving as objects are never complete but evolve over time. Even if most journalists finally accepted Rita as the implied reader and the prototype of the new target audience of the website, the actual choosing and writing of stories for Rita met with difficulties, most of which had to do with lacking competence in web-style writing and dramaturgy of the web.

Rita did not become a shared object easily for the whole newsroom and still some journalists are not comfortable with the idea of aiming their stories to a young woman like Nina and not at the previous targeted audience of the marketing department, namely John, 52, driving a Saab and living in the suburbs in his own house. However the editor-in-chief had also agreed early on in the project that that Rita was to become the implied reader for the website.

The needs of the readers were discussed e. g. with the concept of an implied reader - who are the journalists writing for, what voices to portray in the text and what contradictions in the readers lives they want solve. The readers needs can be identified as including more than just information. The issues of identity, belonging to a group, being entertained, given options on what to think about different issues and forming communities are also important in for people and also for forming lasting readership relations, which are at the core of a successful media concept.

The gender of the implied reader was a major obstacle for some journalists. One middle aged male forcefully declared that he is not going to write about makeup and clothes for Nina, even though no demands like it were never even implied. During the sessions he mellowed quite a bit and in the final session he described himself as Nina's uncle, who now writes for her extended family about how to manage their lives better.

The implied reader was concep was liked by some journalists almost immediately and they suggested in the first sessions and interviews that Rita should also be used in the newspaper.

"Yes, they should be coupled together, the web and the net. What in the their goal and statement of purpose. Now we don't have them. And it is awful to observe this floating aimlessly. It is impossible to do anything unless we have a common goal about what this newspaper is about, what should we write about and in what way"

Rita's favorite hobby was pilates, which was a completely new word for one the male critics of Rita. He said that he had no interest in such frivolous pastimes. Female journalists quickly replied that leisure industry is a growing business sector and could also be treated as a serious topic. And even though the emphasis was on Rita's lifestyle she was also interested in larger issues like global warming or globalization's effects.

The idea of Rita was presented to the whole newsroom in a Friday weekly meeting of the whole newsroom. Some skepticism emerged - also in the disguise of humor. One of the younger male reporters said:

Male reporter: I don't know this Rita. How could we get acquainted.

Female reporter 1: Put on ad in the singles web site.

(Laughter).

Female reporter 2: There are Pilates courses in the downstairs gym,

Female reporter 3: Rita might be sitting closer to you than you think (Laughter)

This bantering discussion seemed to open up also a controversy between the journalistic ideals between female reporters and male reporters. The issue needs further analysis as the episode was not one of its kind.

Some of the male reporters en thought that choosing Rita would begin to dumb down the content of the web site and make them seem less professional in the eyes of colleagues in other newspapers.. The reply from another reporter was:

"If Rita gets interested in a story it does not mean that John won't read it. He might be more inclined to read it, because the language would be clearer and the headline less boring".

In the discussions it was noted that with Rita as the implied reader the topics and frames would be different too different (soft) from the printed Paper. The reply to this criticism was that the web has "unlimited" space so there was a possibility to add stories and links related to Rita's

own life situation and interests and create new sections e.g. on hobbies, lifestyle, human relations, work life etc besides keeping the serious news sections. Some journalist suggested that also the traditional news events needed headlines and summary leads both in printed and web stories that would instantly show why this story matters and why it should be read.

The group that was to start the web site agreed quickly on the need of an implied reader and a variety of content from news to entertainment. The change was more difficult for the rest of the news room and the group seemed to get tired with the ongoing bickering on the issue facts vs. tabloidization. One of them entered the discussion in a Friday meeting:

“We should avoid talking only in dichotomies, when ever we have this discussion people talk only about two extremes: only heavy facts or only entertainment. But we should not overlook and despise generally interesting stories. If someone can write a story that is read by half a million people, isn't that proof of superb journalistic expertise - when you can write a story that interests so many people.”

The audience needs and interests discussions turned into a duel of two contrasting variations: One side thought that it is not enough to send important information to readers but the stories should also be read, otherwise why write them at all. This group wanted to focus on the reasons for choosing the topics and issues from the viewpoint of Rita's life and interests and on the presentation of the stories – ways of writing and visual presentation.

The other group criticized taking into account audience needs and interests as dumbing down the content and losing journalistic independence. Paying attention to the style of presentation was just part of the trend to commercialize journalism in their beloved experts fields.

However gradually the resistance began to lessen as reporters noticed that they still wrote about serious economic and political issues and actually had more freedom to do longer analytical pieces for the paper. The click in the web site showed that serious news still interested the readers and as the readership grew rapidly from 40 000 readers a week into 300 000 Rita became more a more popular concept. This issue was discussed in weekly newsroom meeting:

News editor: The story of the new Google director in Finland had 14 000 readers, and it was economic news.

Managing editor: The most read news story in the web since the web site was renewed was the story about a virus that steals pass words of Finnish bank cards. And this of course is economic news also.

Discussion

The story of the newspaper continued so that the web site had last fall well over 400 000 weekly readers most weeks but the newspaper was closed down last year. Most of the reporters accepted the offer to continue in the web paper but a dozen journalists rather left for free lance work or unemployment rather than become a web journalist. Other research has shown that the change from being a print journalist was not easy for some and they retained for example the

print timetable and it was very for them to accept the demand of writing short news snippets at first and then enlarge the coverage in the net. They would rather sit on their story until their shift ended and submit the story just before they were leaving (Thurman & Myllylahti, 2009).

The relationship between journalistic identity and ideology and their discourses about the audience merit more research and understanding as it seems to have a large influence on the actual content on printed media or web sites. The actual opinions and practices may differ greatly from the ideal rules or norms often proposed as the driving force of news journalism.

Another point is to study different mediums and media products as they have their or practices and norms. For example magazines and newspapers still differ in taking into account audiences interest and needs. This leads also to the question that would that mean more commercialization and tabloidization or better and more relevant journalism for people in their everyday world.

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